Tanganyika G-5 (ca. 1926) 1927-28
FLA Dorobo FLA

Some African Folk-Tales, Folk-Lore and Superstitions

"*Epiko kimoko kitii*" [1]

Time surveyed a Wakiwi Dorobo whom I called on his silence and attitude of strained attention during a halt by the wayside when on safari in the remoter areas of the Tanganyika Masai Reserve.

The bush and what can be wrested from it—wood for his bow and arrows, honey for his wife and children and for barter, the bark of the *Olmukutan* [2] tree, fibre for plaiting into his hair, and last (but most important of all) the skins and the meat of game animals—these things bound the horizon of the Dorobo. It is therefore not to be wondered at that such folk-lore tales as exist among the Dorobo at the present time are chiefly concerned with animals and animal life. Similarly, the paramount interest in life of the Masai is apparent from a study of the extant folk-tales of that tribe, which deal, to a great extent, with cattle and other domestic stock. The tales one hears told to-day are, in all probability, but a few of the more easily remembered of a host of stories now forgotten for all time.

The following examples have been selected from a large number of stories told by the Wiwiro themselves and admitted by the Masai to be Dorobo in origin.

The Child and the Elephant.—The Child, when out walking in the bush one day, chanced to fall over a piece of elephant-dung in his path. This made him very angry and he said: "How am I recommended by the dung of the elephant? I am so small that I cannot hope to accommodate him in the morning, but I will arrange for all the members of my tribe to come and make use of one piece, and then in time the long may grow big enough to trip a passing elephant." This is the reason why piles of child-dung, showing that many of them animals have used the same place, are often seen in the middle of a bush path. (A story very like this is told by certain Central tribes.)

The Tortoise, the Hare and the Hyaena.—These three made an agreement to rob a rich snake. The latter had cattle and

[1] "I am listening to something in the bush." [2] *Ha Masai Ex-ole, bulb.*
* Persons underlined according to the authority quoted in Italic. † A word or a remark, for money and to produce a large appetite. ‡ A night given by the Masai and a name in the Dorobo vocabulary.